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National Intelligence Bulletin

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LEBANON

Lebanese military, political, and religious leaders reportedly have tentatively agreed that President Franjiyah must step down. Parliament is scheduled to meet today to approve a formula for a "legal" resignation.

Brigadier Ahdab, who led the move against Franjiyah on Thursday, apparently has decided to allow the politicians time to work out some face-saving procedure in order to win the all-important support or acquiescence of the right-wing Christian Phalanges Party. A statement by a pro-Ahdab news agency last night—well after the 24-hour deadline for the government's resignation had passed—merely warned Franjiyah against delaying his resignation.

The President apparently recognizes that his support is steadily eroding as Christian political leaders become convinced that Ahdab has the cooperation of most Christian officers in the army high command, and is not proposing a revolutionary program threatening Christian interests. Franjiyah indicated yesterday that he would resign if asked by a two-thirds majority of parliament; a radio station controlled by his forces announced last night that "there is a formula for a political solution."

If parliament proves unable to agree on a political solution to the crisis, however, or if Franjiyah balks, Ahdab will be likely to go ahead with his announced plan to establish a "military command council." Ahdab presumably would be one of several members of this group, which would govern until parliament elected a new president.

Lebanese leaders—Christian and Muslim—appear to accept Ahdab's assurances that he will be only a "temporary military governor" who will return the government to civilian hands within a short time. Thus, the coup has been almost bloodless, as none of the principal private militias is interested in setting off a new round of fighting for the sake of either the transient Ahdab or the unpopular Franjiyah.

There was sporadic firing in Beirut yesterday, apparently by isolated groups of militiamen, and clashes continued between loyalist and rebel Lebanese army troops in northern Lebanon.

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The unsettled conditions throughout the Muslim areas of Lebanon probably will stabilize quickly if Ahdab is successful. The rebel Lebanese Arab Army has announced its support for Ahdab, and the group's leader, Lieutenant Khatib, reportedly is in Damascus.

Khatib's renegade force—apparently in uneasy alliance with Palestinian units—has been left in control of virtually all military bases in southern Lebanon. The Israelis almost certainly are aware of this, although they are taking no action in the border area pending evidence of how strict Syria will be in controlling these Palestinian and rebel Lebanese units.

Prime Minister Rabin held top-level consultations yesterday to evaluate the military and political implications for Israel of developments in Lebanon, and Israel's chief of military intelligence briefed the Knesset foreign affairs and security committees. Defense Minister Peres said in an interview that Israel will remain a "passive observer," but warned that any change in Lebanon that might affect the security of Israel's border or the safety of Israeli settlements would require Israel to take "countermeasures."

For its part, Syria is likely to try to keep order in southern Lebanon to deny Israel an excuse to intervene and to facilitate resolution of the political crisis in Beirut. Damascus has adopted a publicly neutral position in the Ahdab-Franjiyah dispute, although Syrian officials almost certainly knew that a coup was coming and hope to see Ahdab succeed.

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NIGERIA

The public executions this week of 30 Nigerian military officers for their alleged roles in the coup attempt and assassination last month of the country's chief of state—General Muhammed, a Muslim Hausa from northern Nigeria—is likely to heighten ethnic and religious suspicions. Many of those executed apparently were members of the predominantly Christian minority tribes of central Nigeria.

The executions, coming less than a month after the abortive coup, obviously are intended as a warning to other would-be coup makers. They may also be designed to placate the Muslim Hausas. Hausa resentment over the failure to punish Christian Ibo officers who killed a number of Hausa leaders in Nigeria's first coup a decade ago played a role in the subsequent riots that set the stage for the Nigerian civil war.

The secrecy of the trials and the hasty executions will not sit well with many Nigerians, especially the minorities. They are likely to be particularly disturbed at the execution of Major General Bisalla, a respected officer who was commissioner of defense, a member of the ruling Supreme Military Council, and the highest ranking officer executed.

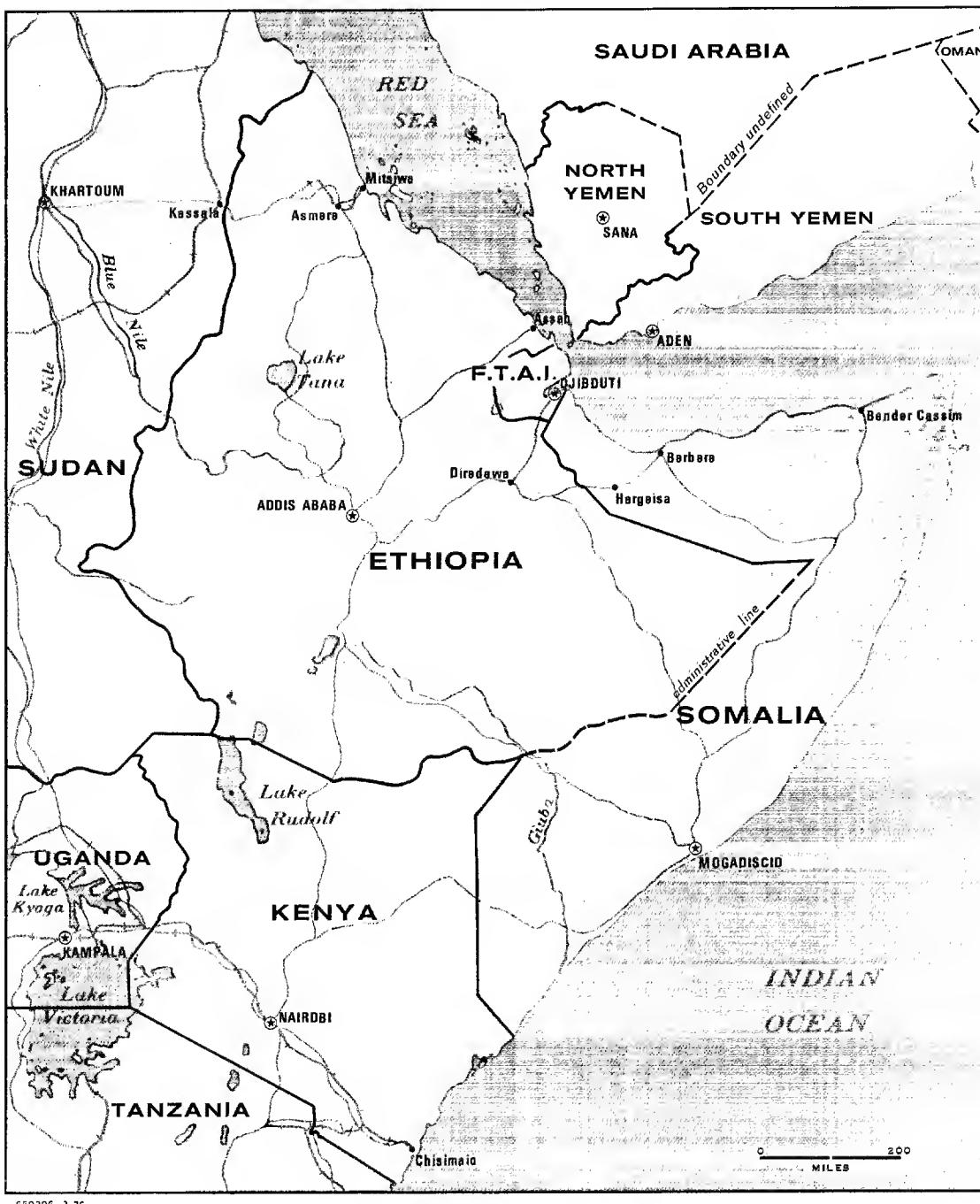
Bisalla was one of the more prominent minority officers in the army. He had been disgruntled with what he viewed as attempts by the late chief of state to squeeze minority groups out of decision-making, but we still have no clear picture of his role in the plot.

High-ranking officers from the minority tribes appear to be lying low for the moment, but in the coming months they may begin reasserting themselves. The minority tribes make up at least a third of the army's enlisted men and perhaps an equal percentage of the officers.

The Nigerian government, meanwhile, is attempting to extradite from the UK former chief of state Gowon, who was implicated by the coup leader. We expect that the British will be reluctant to accede to the request, although any footdragging on this issue would probably lead to another round of student demands for reprisals against British interests in Nigeria.

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The Horn of Africa



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FRANCE-SOMALIA-ETHIOPIA

French President Giscard appears to have decided to speed up the timetable for granting independence to the French Territory of the Afars and Issas and appears prepared to relinquish French base rights there, rather than become involved in a potential military conflict.

No timetable was given for independence when the French decision was announced on December 31, but French officials implied the process could take up to two years. France would prefer to remain in Djibouti because of its relative closeness to both the Middle East and France's home waters.

Djibouti is France's only major naval base remaining in the Indian Ocean. Its strategic location near the entrance to the Red Sea enables the French to protect key oil supply routes to the West and monitor Soviet naval activity in the Gulf of Aden. Operating out of Djibouti, the French Indian Ocean flotilla is the largest Western naval force in the ocean.

If the French are forced to relinquish the base, they almost certainly will have to increase the number of supply and support craft assigned to the area—at least for the near term. They also will be forced to rely more heavily on their limited support facilities at La Reunion, an island east of the Malagasy Republic.

According to several French diplomats stationed in eastern Africa, Paris now plans:

- to make clear to local leaders that the retention of French forces and facilities is not a precondition for independence;
- to call a meeting of the two domestic political parties and rival liberation movements, one backed by Ethiopia and the other by Somalia, to plan for independence;
- to hold a referendum in the territory, possibly supervised by observers from the UN, the Organization of African Unity, and the Arab League, as early as June to elect a new government.

A senior French official—who is a personal representative of President Giscard—will visit Somalia, Ethiopia, and apparently some Arab capitals in the next few weeks to discuss the composition of a local government and problems relating to the territory's security after independence.

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Paris' policy shift began taking shape several weeks ago. France had hoped to transfer power to a government led by Ali Aref Bourhan, the pro-French leader of the territorial council. As Aref's political weakness became increasingly evident, however, France strengthened its contacts with the only legal opposition group in Djibouti—the African People's Independence League—and began pressing Aref to reach an accommodation with it.

France has apparently drawn further away from Aref by suggesting its willingness to withdraw all its troops after independence. Aref is still calling for a French military presence, which he believes is essential if the territory is to maintain its independence.

The French may be seeking an arrangement that will allow them to withdraw before becoming involved in local conflicts. Neighboring Somalia is determined to pursue its long-standing aim of annexing the territory. Ethiopia is equally determined to prevent Somalia from dominating the territory and its port of Djibouti, the terminus of Ethiopia's only important rail link to the sea.

Paris obviously hopes that talks among the four local political groups will produce an agreement enabling them to cooperate at least long enough to allow a peaceful transition to independence.

Somali President Siad has reacted favorably to the French initiative because he believes the withdrawal of French troops will enhance Somalia's ability to gain control of the territory. [redacted]

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Ethiopia, on the other hand, will consider the French plans as favorable to Somalia. The Ethiopians will almost certainly begin giving serious consideration to means of forestalling a Somali take-over in Djibouti.

The French ambassador in Mogadiscio has informed a US embassy officer that France has "told" Moscow, which supports Somalia, to "respect the wishes of the territory's people." He implied that Paris had suggested that Franco-Soviet relations could suffer if Somalia does not cooperate with French efforts to withdraw from the territory gracefully and to guarantee its security for at least a face-saving period after independence. [redacted]

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ISRAEL

Four Arab municipal councils have submitted their resignations to the Israeli military government in protest against the "crushing" of student demonstrations in the continuing unrest on the West Bank.

The resignations of the councils in Ramallah, Al Birah, and Bir Zayt were announced on Wednesday; the Nablus administration resigned three days earlier. Nablus, a traditional trouble spot, has been partially paralyzed by a general strike. There were several explosions in the center of town, but little damage was done. Other West Bank towns and villages, including Tulkarm, Jericho, and Janin, are also said to be restive.

Latent Arab discontent has been sparked by an Israeli court decision in late January permitting prayers by Jews on the Temple Mount, the site of the Al Aqsa Mosque, and the Dome of the Rock, two of Islam's holiest shrines. Demonstrations since then have been marked by frequent clashes between the mostly youthful demonstrators and Israeli security forces.

The latest round of strikes and resignations was precipitated by the action of security forces on March 7 against high school students in Nablus that included entry of frontier guard troops into classrooms and the reported beating of female students.

Arab political leaders appear to be attempting to use the current unrest as leverage to extract concessions from the Israelis. The acting mayor of Nablus has declared that local leaders have decided to cease cooperating with Israeli officials unless three conditions are met:

- authorities must annul the court ruling permitting prayers by Jews on the Temple Mount;
- security forces must be prohibited from pursuing student demonstrators into classrooms;
- appropriation of Arab land in the West Bank area must be banned.

The Israeli government has appealed the court ruling while continuing to enforce the regulation prohibiting Jewish prayer services on the Temple Mount. Israel might agree to restrain security forces if school authorities agree to keep demonstrations under control. It is virtually certain that the Israelis will make no concessions on the politically sensitive Arab land issue.

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The Israeli command on the West Bank should have no trouble controlling further demonstrations. Security and police forces have reportedly been reinforced, and the authorities are said to be considering appointing committees headed by army officers to replace the municipal councils that have resigned. The current unrest, however, could affect the municipal election on April 12.

The heavy handed tactics employed so far could increase support for radical candidates at the expense of the more traditional Arab candidates. Alternatively, should widespread unrest continue, elections might have to be put off.

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IRAQ

The role of the rapidly growing Iraqi People's Army, which [redacted] now numbers over 100,000, will not only lessen the ruling Baath Party's vulnerability to potential coups, but will also develop popular support for Baath programs.

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The People's Army has been built on the old Baath Party militia-national guard—which numbered about 17,000 in early 1972. It has units in 12 of Iraq's 14 provinces, and its organization extends down from the provinces through the district, to the sub-district, and finally to the village.

The Army, a part-time force receiving no pay, consists wholly of Baath Party members over 18 years of age. Its training is conducted in army facilities, using both People's Army and regular army training personnel; it concentrates on individual training and small unit tactics. The force's primary mission in time of emergency will be to provide protection to urban centers and key installations.

The People's Army is commanded by Taha Al Jazrawi, a long-time Baath Party member and a member of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council. Al Jazrawi, a strong supporter of Iraqi strong man Saddam Husayn, was formerly director of the Baath Military Bureau, which has been a key factor in the long party struggle with the army for political dominance in Iraq. He claims the People's Army will double its strength in the next few years.

The Baath Party has also been making a major effort to increase party control of schools and universities and to incorporate lectures on Baathism into the regular curricula.

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INDIA

The collapse yesterday of the coalition government in Gujarat, and the subsequent imposition of "president's rule" from New Delhi, removes the last state government headed by an opponent of Prime Minister Gandhi. The coalition's downfall was triggered by defections by Gandhi's Congress Party and the loss of a close vote in the state legislature on a budget item.

Gandhi's decision to suspend, rather than to dissolve, the legislature suggests she will allow the Congress Party time to try to pull together a majority. She probably does not want to call a statewide election because of the opposition's apparent popularity.

The Congress Party won a plurality in the election in Gujarat last June, but an opposition coalition, capitalizing on widespread dissatisfaction with local economic conditions and resentment of Gandhi's increasingly authoritarian rule, formed a government with a narrow majority. The outgoing chief minister has had trouble keeping this coalition intact during his nine-month tenure.

The new situation greatly strengthens New Delhi's control in Gujarat, where officials have been lax in enforcing some of the repressive measures Gandhi imposed last June under the national emergency. The central government is eager to round up some key dissidents who are believed to be operating out of Gujarat and who are reportedly trying to organize an underground resistance movement.

The imposition of president's rule may evoke scattered public demonstrations in Gujarat, but government security forces appear capable of maintaining order.

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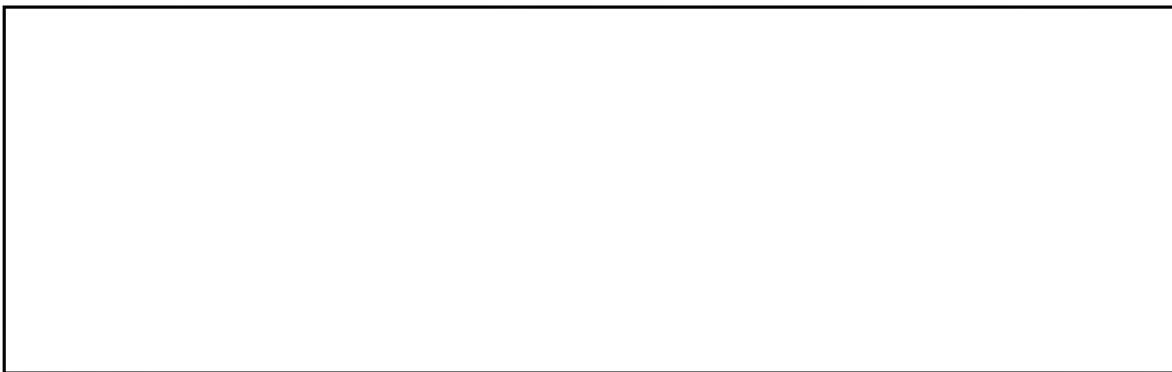
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ICELAND-UK

The Icelandic cabinet is studying the Norwegian proposal for resolving the cod war with the British, and there are preliminary signs that the response will be favorable.

The proposal calls for London to pull out its warships and all but 20 trawlers, which Iceland would promise not to harass. The British want to keep a few more than 20 trawlers in the area, and Icelandic Prime Minister Hallgrimsson hopes to be able to convince his cabinet to accept 22. If agreement is reached on the number of trawlers, there is still the issue of estimated trawler capacity and the problems this would create for the Icelandic government once it is publicized.

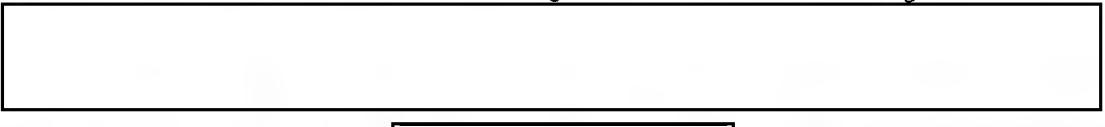
Iceland claims that the 20-odd British trawlers could catch about 55,000 tons of fish annually, while London estimates that the ships could take nearly 70,000 tons. If the British announce that the proposed agreement will provide a catch of more than 65,000 tons, chances for ratification by Reykjavik are nil. Thus, both may have to avoid mentioning the catch limit, a factor that could cause serious misunderstandings later.



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Any agreement probably would be limited to four to six months, which would generally coincide with the expiration date of the present arrangement between Iceland and West Germany.

The prospects for a favorable Icelandic response also depend upon public opinion not being inflamed by new incidents at sea. There have been three ramming incidents this week between British frigates and Icelandic coast guard vessels.



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CHILE

President Pinochet is preparing to make the first change in the ruling junta. There also are indications that he is considering ways to ensure the army's preeminent position in the government.

Admiral Merino, Pinochet's designated successor under existing statutes, apparently intends to resign because of poor health. Merino reportedly suffered a heart attack in mid-February and has been on extended leave. It is [redacted] reported that Foreign Minister Admiral Carvajal will be named Merino's successor on the four-man junta.

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Carvajal's appointment would not change the navy's conservative voice in the ruling body, and his close working relationship with Pinochet would probably further strengthen the latter's hand. The navy has been dissatisfied with Merino's failure to communicate its opinions and concerns to the President, and Carvajal is expected to facilitate smoother relations.

Both navy and air force officers have been disgruntled by the declining influence of their services, but neither has been willing to risk the unity of the armed forces to keep Pinochet from gaining more power.

Merino's departure would elevate the air force's junta member, General Leigh—a frequent critic of Pinochet's policies—to the senior position, making him next in line to head the junta. This prospect would make Pinochet even more dissatisfied with the present system of rotating the presidency to the senior member, which at least in theory would strip the army of its dominant role in the event of his incapacitation.

To avoid any such possibility, Pinochet will probably try to change the present provisions. He might even attempt to dispense with the cumbersome junta structure altogether. The major constraint in taking this step now would be fear that it would raise new criticism at home and abroad that Pinochet is bent on establishing a personal dictatorship.

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USSR-ANGOLA: The USSR has agreed to establish a civil air service to Luanda, according to the Angolan news agency. Boris Bugayev, the Soviet minister of civil aviation, made the announcement following his arrival in the Angolan capital on March 7 for a week of technical discussions. Aeroflot currently makes two flights a week to Brazzaville, Congo, and this route will probably be extended to include Luanda. Although the date that service will begin is not yet known, Moscow can be expected to proceed expeditiously.

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